



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILD

Writing Comments that Stick

Submitting written comments and protests to governmental agencies can be an effective way to make your voice heard, and to protect our natural resources – be it a National Monument, a rare plant species, a recreation area, or land being leased for fossil fuel development. But, all comments are not created equal. In fact, governmental agencies can throw your comments out if you don't follow the proper procedures. So, let's take a few minutes to make sure we get it right, and make sure that your time and effort are well spent.

Here is your sticky comment checklist:

- Send it to the right address and in the correct format. The Federal Register, agency announcement, or website will specify exactly how to submit your comments. Follow directions.
- Don't miss the deadline. While some processes have open deadlines for commenting, most don't. Check the date and time for submission (including relevant time zone), and get it in on time.
- Write in your own words. Copy and paste comments don't get counted as individual comments. Neither do simple sign-on online letters. While it is great to show that we have thousands of people supporting an issue, it doesn't add to the information the agency uses to make a decision. Take the time to write your own comments.
- Show relevance. How does this issue affect you? Is it a place where you camp with your family? Is it the headwaters of your drinking water? Is it a species you enjoy watching or looking for? How will you be harmed if the action happens?
- Be on topic. If the action involves evaluating alternatives, then write about the alternatives. If the action involves opposing a development, then talk about the development. Overarching platitudes fall on deaf ears.
- Show your expertise. Back up your requests with facts and science. Tell the agency something they may not already know and need to add to the record. Site examples if you have them. (Don't let this step intimidate you – even one fact can make a difference. Pro Tip: Google)
- Be concise. Help the agency get your point, don't hide it from them. And, grammar is important.
- Be respectful. This is serious stuff, make sure to treat it that way.